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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the factors that influence production and distribution of children's books for the mass market, distinguishing the commercially oriented market from the nonprofit, "library market" segment of the publishing industry. The paper presents interviews with 46 people from mass-market publishing firms and focuses on three organizations within the mass market to investigate the following topics: the historical roots of the mass market; the mass market today; publishing requirements, economic considerations, feedback, and promotion in the mass market; publishers' responses to the mass-market environment; decision-making structures and processes in publishing firms; guidelines for books (characterization, writing styles, and illustrations); and possibilities for expanding the spectrum of choice in the mass market to include library-market titles. (RL)

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PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTING CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR THE MASS MARKET

by

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This paper will focus upon the "mass market" for children's books, an area of juvenile publishing which gets scant attention in library literature--or anywhere else, for that matter. The mass market segment of juvenile publishing is quite distinct from the more familiar "library market" segment. The latter consists mostly of non-profit institutions whose (usually publicly employed) selectors generally buy books from library-oriented publishing firms. The commercially-oriented mass market for children's books, on the other hand, is dominated by department, chain, and book store organizations which support a different group of publishing firms. While the books in these two markets do sometimes overlap--particularly with regard to certain paperback reprints of successful library titles--the general spectrum of book choices available to children and their parents is usually quite different in each arena.

Writers who discuss this difference tend to speak about library and "department store" books in valuative terms. For example, Selma Lanes (1971), in a wide-ranging exposition on children's literature, praises library products as creative while condemning mass market output as hackneyed and non-literary. The present paper will side-step this problemmatic subject of "quality" and, instead, will attempt to describe the forces that help to create the spectrum of choice in the mass market. The aim will be to answer two fundamental questions: What organizational factors shape the activities and policies which lead to the

production and distribution of books for the mass market? And, why do the great majority of new titles which get approval in the library market never see the florescence of department or book store lights?

In order to address these questions, and as part of a larger study of the juvenile book industry (Turow, 1976), a series of in-depth examinations of the activities of people who select mass market juveniles was undertaken. Lengthy interviews were conducted with 46 people in several mass market publishing firms, jobber organizations, and distribution outlets. Three organizations--a large mass market publishing firm, a department store chain in a large city, and a national book store chain--received special scrutiny: Their selection activities and choices were charted intensively as "case" examples. The findings, which help illuminate the process by which books that reach millions of American children are produced, also suggest problems and possibilities regarding the injection of more library market diversity into the mass market.

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE MASS MARKET

To understand the structure of today's mass market for juvenile books--and to comprehend its separation from the library market--it is necessary to take a historical perspective. Non-text books for children have been sold in non-library outlets since the early days of the American colonies. However, it was not until the mid-19th century that such books began to be produced in large numbers and sold to different kinds of commercial outlets (what has been called "the mass market"). One important impetus for this large-scale production of juveniles was the folding of the American Sunday School Union--a religious umbrella organization

which was the exclusive producer of books for Sunday School libraries (Long, 1969, p. 85).

Dismantling of the Sunday School Union forced the Sunday School librarians, who were generally not knowledgable about book selection, to turn to the open market for their purchasing. This activity itself had two consequences: First, it precipitated a flood of extremely inexpensive picture books which were sold both to the librarians and to the general public (unpromoted because low profit margins did not make that feasible) through book stores and dry goods emporia. Second, it encouraged the nascent movement to establish children's rooms in public libraries, with supervision and book selection to be carried out by professionals. This children's library movement eventually diminished the importance of the Sunday School library and created a stable new market for books. The increasing number of juvenile libraries requiring an increasing number of titles that would meet selection guidelines (as mass market books did not) encouraged the cultivation of the new sales arena by publishing firms that wanted to escape the savage mass market competition which the inundation of juveniles had sparked. Other publishers continued to focus their attentions upon the mass market.

THE RISE OF ADVENTURE SERIES BOOKS

At the same time that picture books for the very young were deluging stores, paperback "dime novels" for adolescents were also extremely popular in those outlets. The publishing of such books reached its 19th century zenith in the firm of Street and Smith which, in addition to producing many of Horatio Alger's works, released such extremely popular "libraries" as the "Frank Merriwell" series, "Nick Carter," and "Buffalo Bill." Each series

was created by one of the firm's regular writers or editors under a pseudonym and was often continued by a staff of ghostwriters. Among the firm's most prolific personnel was Edward Stratemeyer who, when he left Street and Smith, created the enormously popular "Rover Boys" adventure series. The "Rover Boys" was the forerunner of other series which Stratemeyer and his ghostwriters produced in a similar style (and between "respectable" hard covers), including "Tom Swift," "The Hardy Boys," and "Nancy Drew." The production of mass market adventure series books (by the unit which Stratemeyer affiliated with Grosset and Dunlap and by others) has continued into the present (Tebbel, 1975, pp. 481-488).

DEVELOPMENTS IN PICTURE BOOKS

The production of picture books was profoundly affected by the adoption of new techniques in photo-offset lithography during the 1930s which made titles in full color possible at a lower cost than ever before. Publishers in the mass market and library market reacted very differently to the new development. The library market firms emphasized the artistic possibilities which had now become economically feasible at library market prices and which librarians would appreciate, while the goal of mass market firms was to lower the prices of color picture books to such an extent that a multitude of commercial outlets would feel the books could be sold to their Depression-ridden customers (Meigs, et. al., 1967, p. 402; Tebbel, 1975, p. 295).

Output of these picture books (typically retailing at 15 or 20 cents as compared with about two dollars for library market books) was quite vigorous during the 1930s. The Western Publishing Company was most aggressive in this area and by the beginning of World War II had cornered almost 90% of the market through its

Whitman imprint.[1] In fact, Western's executives became concerned they were reaching the limits of expansion with regard to the Whitman books and that retailers were beginning to feel forced to buy Whitman because competition was so weak. At the same time, some book stores and other outlets were not carrying the Whitman line because its very low prices made their profit margin unacceptable or because they were not returnable if unsold. Consequently, in an attempt to expand its mass market and set up its own competition, Western Publishing entered into an agreement with Pocket Books, Inc. to initiate a new imprint--Golden Books. Because the intention was to expand the market rather than to compete with Whitman, the firms agreed to push the imprint as higher "quality" than the older one and to dictate a retail price of 25 cents (a nickle more than the most expensive Whitman books). Also, in order to further induce stores to carry the Golden line, the books were sold with a "returnable" provision.

THE MASS MARKET TODAY

The expansion of Golden Books into many kinds of outlets, some of which had not carried the Whitman lines, and the books' consequent success at the consumer level, changed the complexion of the mass market for juveniles. By 1965, when Western gained complete control of Golden Books, several firms had directly emulated or modified what had become that company's basic marketing procedure--orienting a wide range of titles and prices to a panoply of commercial outlet clients (from book stores to supermarkets). Interestingly, however, the particular client relationship which Western (along with Rand McNally and a few others) had cultivated during the 1930s and 1940s has severely limited the ability of publishing firms to enter the field. Generally, it can be said

that fewer than ten firms have significance in the juvenile mass market. Moreover, the expansion of the market precipitated by the success of Golden Books has actually created several sectors within that sales arena based on types of outlets reached, distribution routes used, and prices charged for books. Some firms have chosen--or have been forced by economic circumstance--to concentrate on only a few of these areas.

The following sections will explain this situation by elaborating upon the relationship between publishing firms, jobbers, and outlets in the mass market. In the process, it will be seen how the client relationship which has developed has not only tended to fix the number of publishing firms in the mass market, it has also influenced the structure of those firms' juvenile divisions, the types of books which those divisions publish, the procedures by which they produce those books, and the guidelines which they follow.

THE PUBLISHING REQUIREMENTS OF THE MASS MARKET

Regardless of the sector in which a mass market publishing firm operates, there are certain general requirements that all interviewees agreed must be recognized if the firm is to be successful in the most crucial aspect of the selling process--getting the books on retail shelves. These requirements were seen to be shaped by three general features of the marketplace--its environment of selection, its economic assumptions, and its feedback and promotional environment.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF SELECTION

A particularly prominent feature of the mass market at all its sectors is the general dearth of sustained advertising by publishers

to potential consumers, a dearth which has historical roots and continues for reasons of cost and industry inertia. Several interviewees in production, jobber, and outlet organizations noted that in publishing there are three kinds of books which are competitive at their points of purchase--dictionaries, bibles, and children's books. Generally, consumers come upon such books with few, if any, preconceived notions of the particular editions they want. Moreover, the interviewees stressed, clerks in most stores have little knowledge about juveniles and are not prepared (nor do they have the time) to introduce particular titles on particular subjects to curious browsers.

The absence of effective outside promotion and personal in-store aid for potential book customers has brough jobber and book store agents to demand that the books they purchase essentially "sell themselves." In order to catch the potential customer's eye, most outlets display their picture books on racks or "flat out" on tables. Due to lack of space (and on the idea that their readers will search them out), adolescent series books have generally been shelved "spine out," although there has been a tendency in some places to rack these with their covers showing. Several interviewees pointed out that while adolescent titles sell quite well, pre-school materials are the most important items in the mass market. One publishing executive opined that "young people who read, read adult books."

Titles that have proven their ability to sell themselves are bought repeatedly by jobbers and outlets. Their agents judge the potentials of new books by gauging similarities to those which are currently successful within the mass market environment in terms of format, cover attractiveness, subject, illustrative style, and

(in a very limited number of cases) the author-illustrator. The importance of a book's similarity to others with good mass market "track records" was underscored when interviewees pointed out that it is much easier to sell a new title to a jobber or store representative if it is introduced as an addition to a popular "line" (a group of titles in similar format). The jobber agents--particularly those who deal exclusively with very inexpensive children's books--noted a distaste for handling juvenile titles not connected to pre-sold lines. A salesperson from a publishing firm said that the concept of a line is at least as impo rtant a device for getting books into stores as it is for achieving recognition and sales at the ultimate consumer level. And, in the words of a publishing executive, "if you can get them in [stores, particularly enough stores to justify the necessarily low price of the book] you can sell them."

THE ECONOMIC ASSUMPTIONS

Economic considerations were also noted by interviewees from throughout the mass market as creating demands--and opportunities--for jobbers, retailers, and publishers. Several pointed out that customers seem to be extremely sensitive to the prices of children's books. A juvenile division's publisher, for example, opined that people probably do not even look at the number of pages they get for their price; they simply look at the price. Moreover, he said, comparative sales figures show that customers prefer picture books with full-color illustrations over those which are not in full color.

The sales manager of a publishing firm agreed with a suggestion that these presumed predilections might well be a consequence of the presumed "point of purchase" ignorance on the part of parents and children as to what constitutes a good children's book. Perhaps

because they have few, if any, formal notions about "quality" in juveniles, they see color and price as major elements of concern.[2] Of more concrete and immediate significance to the publishing house interviewees, however, was the fact that jobber and store agents judge full color and competitively low prices as crucial factors for salability.

Different retailers and jobbers require different "price points" with regard to juveniles. Extremely "low ticket" items (below $1) are usually sold in assortment packages to "independent distributors"--wholesalers who place items in variety, drug, cigar, and candy stores along with magazines and adult paperbacks. Variety chains and some department stores (which buy either directly form publishers or from traditional book trade jobbers) tend to choose lines that retail between $1 and $2.50, while book stores and department stores with book sections prefer a higher range, between $2.50 and $5 or $6.

Generally, the maximum "price points" acceptable to a retailer (or a wholesaler that sells to that retailer) will reflect the perceptions by buyers that their customers will not pay more. Minimum price points are most often determined by a pragmatic economic consideration, a feeling by buyers that lower-priced titles will not bring in a high enough per-unit profit (even with brisk sales) to justify the use of space. This consideration explains why some bookstores refuse to carry the relatively new lines of 95¢ paperback picture books. Other outlets separate them from the main juvenile section and place them in less valuable space (where there is less traffic, and less visibility). One prestigious New York book store does not rack any juvenile paperbacks during the pre-Christmas season (an especially high turnover time when room

is very precious) but does carry them at other times of the year.

THE FEEDBACK AND PROMOTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The interviewees' understanding of their primary feedback and promotional environment broadened their conceptions of requirements and opportunities facing jobbers, outlets, and publishers in the mass market. People from publishing firms were particularly concerned with the promotional and information-gathering activities of their salespeople, who call upon buyers in stores and jobber organizations at least twice a year to sell titles for the Fall and Spring seasons. Several of the buyers with whom these "publishers' representatives" deal admitted to only a minor interest in children's books. They said they dislike being bothered with single juvenile titles and consequently prefer to deal with firms that have well-developed lines. From the standpoint of a publishing firm, the high cost of initiating and cultivating such lines is an important stumbling block to market entry and pretty much ensures that the same firms which command jobber attention at present will do so in the future. In fact, the president of an important jobbing organization said flatly that he would not take a chance on a mass market juvenile unless it were produced by one of a handful of companies well known for their success.

As if to underscore the importance of a firm's general mass market track record, sales and marketing personnel of the publishing firm that was studied as a case example consistently emphasized that their representatives have "the full weight of the company's name" behind them when they visit buyers. A salesperson who services minor accounts indicated that buyers trust her to the extent that they often let her choose books for them. Salespeople who service major accounts (such as jobbers and large department stores) noted

the same situation. In their case, however, they stressed that neither titles nor lines are the essential units of sale. Rather, the essential units are "programs"--packages of books which the publishers' representatives tailor to the turnover and profit requirements of the buyer and key to the previous year's success in terms of sales and returns.

The crucial role of salespeople in getting books to jobbers and stores places a publishing firm's editorial and marketing executives in the interesting position of having to convince their sales force of the self-salability of new juvenile titles. And, generally speaking, the close contact between salespeople and buyers--and the commitment of the former to maximize the latter's sales--seems to lead to a caution on the part of these publishers' representatives with regard to new books. Salespeople noted that new titles and lines are welcomed only if they are solidly anchored to popular subjects, illustrative styles, and author-illustrators. One salesperson conceded that he and his colleagues might even be more conservative in this regard than jobber or store buyers themselves. This situation would seem to be further incentive for a mass market publishing firm's marketing and creative people not to stray too far from elements of previous success.

THE PUBLISHERS' RESPONSES TO THE MASS MARKET ENVIRONMENT

The general incentives and requirements that interviewees said are dictated by the mass market could be seen to influence the activities of publishing companies interested in creating titles for that market. It is true that different firms could be seen to have different approaches--different "personalities"--that varied according to the tradition of each house and the proclivities of

its current management. For example, certain firms with their own printing plants and a long history in the mass market create many lines and price points so that some of those lines will be attractive to every type of retailer and wholesaler in every sector of the market. Other firms, not able to compete with these giants and deriving their initial strengths from non-book products (such as toys), concentrate on orienting their titles toward only a few types of outlets, usually those where the popularity of other goods help bring the books onto the shelves. Still other firms--often those with a strong adult trade book background but without ability to offer the discount demanded by independent distributors--take the middle road, trying to expand into as many outlets as possible. Despite these differences, however, certain broad similarities could be seen among these firms in terms of the decision-making structure regarding the books to be published, the process by which books are created, and the guidelines by which they are selected.

THE DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

Obviously, the specifics of a firm's decision-making structure will vary with its size and its history. Among all firms that produce children's books for the mass market, however, the ultimate control of marketing, rather than editorial, positions over the particular titles to be published was seen. In one large firm, for example, an editor's idea for a title must be circulated to every marketing executive within the company, any one of whom can veto it. In Global Publishing, as the "middle road" firm that was studied intensively for this investigation will be called, the publisher of the company's juvenile division is also the firm's marketing director. Although the publisher himself claimed that this dual role is "an historical accident," the sales manager and

others mentioned the importance of the publisher's marketing expertise in helping the Division respond quickly and properly to the mass market environment. Significantly, several Global interviewees commented that their Division is more dependent than any other in the company upon the desires of the marketing and sales force.

This control of juvenile book production by marketing interests should be understood as an appropriate response to the aforementioned need by the publishing firms to satisfy the sales force of the self-salability of the new juveniles so they will whole-heartedly recommend them to buyers. The requirement of predictability and efficiency (for low price) is also reflected in other aspects of the decision-making structure. In Global, for example, the people responsible to the publisher for the selection of books are assigned to four separate sextions designated to produce particular lines at particular age levels. Interestingly, the non-editorial control at the Global Publishing level is matched in two of the sections--those which produce "pop-up" books and paperback picture books--by the presence of supervisors who characterize their roles in terms of marketing expertise.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Just as the decision-making structures in mass market firms were observed to be appropriate responses to the requirements of the mass market client relationship, so the approaches to the selection and production of books in the firms were seen to fit those requirements. One generalization that can be made about the selection of titles in the juvenile mass market is that the great majority of them are conceptualized within the firm, often at the specific request of marketing personnel (who tie the particular number of books needed to reports on what buyers are willing to

outlay. Reliable talent is then recruited to complete the job; sometimes the editors themselves write picture book or pop-up book copy. Such a procedure allows for a high degree of control over the final product and--just as important--helps reduce costs, since the writers or illustrators can be paid lump sums or very small royalties for following directions or well-plotted formulas.

In cases where titles are not conceptualized by the publishing staff, they are usually originated by an author-illustrator who is under long-term contract and whose name bespeaks "track record" to salespeople and buyers alike. The use of "name" author-illustrators varies by firms in the mass market. One hindrance to their use in very low-priced lines is the royalty expense which, while quite a bit lower than the royalty received for library market juveniles, nevertheless often prohibits a publisher from retailing a title at less than $1 or $1.50. Still, most mass market firms use the services of at least one or two "names," usually relying on them to help get their higher ticken lines into stores and off the shelves.

THE GUIDELINES FOR BOOKS

The particular guidelines articulated by interviewees from mass market firms were actually a logical extension of the perceived requirements, decision-making structure, and book selection process which have been outlined. It will be recalled that the buyers' demand that a book "sell itself" was related by the respondents to two factors--a competitively low price and content characteristics that bespeak "track record" to buyers. Consequently, the guidelines which the editors use are directed at producing lines with these instant appeals.

The approach used at Global Publishing will serve as a good example. The Global interviewees pointed out that their productions

emphasize the most traditional subjects. Nonfiction sports books and adventure-mystery series are the primary adolescent material (directed at ages 10 and up), while activity books are aimed at middle aged juveniles (ages 8 and up). With regard to the mass market's most important area, picture book fare for young children, the editor/art director of pop-up books echoed her colleagues:

> Cats and dogs are always going to go. Children prefer animal books--cute cuddly animals; they prefer Mother Goose, fairy tales. [The paperback picture books section head added that the fairy tales should be the most commonly known.] The standard juvenile fare are the best sellers.

As this quote implies, the editors and marketers felt that the subjects chosen for their Division's books should be presold to the consumer: The parent or older child walking down the store aisle should not have to read the book (or a long review of it) to find out what it is about. Subjects which do not have this instant appeal--notably poetry (beyond short rhymes) and whimsical fantasy--are not produced. "They're harder to get through. They're harder to get through the house here, through the salespeople, the buyers--everybody," an editor explained.

Characterization, Writing Style, And Illustration

One track record element that was mentioned quite often was character identifiability. From the standpoint of the editors and marketing executives at Global, some of the most important characters in their books are those from other mass media--principally TV, newspaper comics, and comic books--which they (and buyers) consider immediately recognizable to children and their parents. In fact, characters from Walt Disney Productions, "Peanuts," "Misterogers Neighborhood," "Sesame Street," and other non-book sources are licensed in various forms of exclusivity throughout the mass market.

When asked about unusual, non-mainstream characterization, the Global editors did indicate a sensitivity to portraying women in a manner that balances traditional and non-traditional roles and to including Blacks among the characters in picture books. However, the focusing upon racial or ethnic group members in a non-sports framework--and particularly at the picture book level--was considered quite rare. One art director spoke for her colleagues when she explained this situation by saying "because we're aiming at the mass market, we sometimes turn down a book everybody likes because we feel its appeal is too narrow.

It should be noted that while character identifiability was considered important among Global editors, art directors, and section heads, depth and subtlety of portrayal were not mentioned as guidelines and were specifically denied by the editor of adolescent mystery novels. Writing style was similarly not stressed. The respondents seemed to feel that since these content characteristics are not evident to the jobber and store buyers (who do not read the books) nor probably to the adult or child customers (who are "sold" immediately on the subject and other visible track record elements), they can be sacrificed in favor of reduced costs. This feat is accomplished by getting the editors to pen most picture books. With regard to the lengthier adolescent titles, cost-cutting is accomplished by providing plot formulas for writers so they can turn them out quickly for a fee rather than a royalty, or for a very small royalty.

While writing style and character depth were considered only minimally important in mass market books, illustrations, which are highly visible selling points, were deemed extremely important. The styles which mass market interviewees prefer would, by their own admission, be generally unacceptable to librarians--cartoonish,

bright, bold and direct, with a cover "like a poster." When asked to compare their guidelines to those of a library market firm, two art directors at Global added "slightly less sophisticated" and "perhaps more humorous" to the above list.

Potential Problem Areas

At the same time that they attempt to build their lines around "pre-sold" elements which invite point of purchase interest, the producers of mass market juveniles are also extremely careful not to inject any elements into their books which might possibly turn away potential retailer customers (and potential wholesale buyers). Consequently, curse words are virtually unknown in mass market titles. One Global editor echoed her colleagues in noting that "we try not to do anything [in questionable taste], even such words as 'aint.'" She also opined regarding the library market's "realism" vogue that such books "are unnecessary. A lot of it is sort of proving they [i.e. the library market authors and publishing firms] can deal with topics that have not been dealt with."

Interestingly, the fear of injecting into books elements which might turn away potential customers and buyers was related by one editor to the predominant use of animals as main characters in picture books:

> It's easier. You don't have to determine if it's a girl or boy--right? That's such a problem today. And if it's a girl, God forbid you put her in a pink dress. Also, it's very hard to draw children in--how can I put it? Here, for example, in this book the children are cartoony. Now, if you were to draw more realistic children, the whole book would somehow get a little heavier, a little more serious. You have to keep your characters a little lighter, a little more whimsical. And animals lend themselves to that.

EXPANDING THE SPECTRUM OF CHOICE IN THE MASS MARKET

By now, it will have occurred to readers familiar with library market juvenile publishing that the mass market publishing process and its attendent guidelines are quite different from those found in the library market. The ultimate barrier to library market books in the mass market is not their relatively higher prices. Conversations with production personnel in library market firms suggest that with much higher predictable sales and a somewhat different royalty structure, their titles could be tagged at price points competitive with some of the more expensive mass market books. Rather, the ultimate barrier is a market relationship between publishers and distributors--rooted in history, continuing through mutual benefit, and reinforced by general public and mass media apathy--that refuses to treat children's books as it treats adult books. Instead of buying individual juvenile titles from many publishers, jobber and book store agents look to a few major suppliers to merchandise products to them in a routinized manner. Library market publishing companies are not oriented to this merchandising tradition and cannot compete by its rules.

Interestingly, the paperback reprints of library market titles which are found in some stores are placed there in conformance with mass market rules. The initial entry of these books into stores on a large scale was accomplished in the late 1960s by Dell, a huge adult mass market publisher that had the persuasive clout to place a rack of classic children's titles in stores. Generally, paperbacks are accepted by jobber and store agents according to traditional juvenile book criteria. A handful of firms with track record lines are dealt with almost exclusively. Titles are chosen because they

are almost instantly recognizable classics (e.g. National Velvet), are tie-ins to other media (the "Little House" books), or are titles which have been very successfully promoted to children and parents in libraries. This influence of the library market upon the mass market should not be over-estimated, however. For example, an audit of a big-city department store with a large paperback display revealed in Spring, 1976 that of 105 juvenile paperback titles on display, only 42 (40%) were derived from contemporary library market titles.

Is it at all possible to change the mass market rules so that new and recent library market titles--in handback and paperback--can be introduced on a large scale into book and department stores? To ask about the possibility of this change perhaps implies its desirability, and, insofar as the influx of books librarians value would increase the spectrum of aesthetic choice, the change would seem desirable from the standpoint of the child. However, the mass market firms certainly have no desire to see increased competition in their arena. And library market publishers have not indicated any strong desires to bring about drastic changes from the cozy relationship with libraries which they have cultivated over the years. Only when government funding has dropped drastically (as it did during the past several years) have rumblings about expanding into the trade arena begun to be heard. One might expect that the predicted increases in library funding under the Carter administration would quell such recently heard rumblings.

Perhaps, however, a movement to introduce library market titles into book and department stores can be sparked--by the concerted effort of altruistic librarians who see the intangible but precious value of book ownership over borrowing, and by library market publishing

firms that are tired of being wed to a Federal funds roller coaster. The effort will involve re-educating jobber representatives, book store agents, and the book-buying public about children's books. General slogans like "buy your child a good book" will not work, since they will aid already entrenched lines. Essentially as much excitement (and pre-selling) will have to be generated about individual juvenile titles in the mass media, among jobbers, among book store executives, and among the public as is generated with regard to certain adult titles. The task will undoubtedly be a long and difficult one. It is hoped that this discussion of the production of juvenile books in the mass market has helped a bit by contributing to an understanding of that marketplace and highlighting the policies and perspectives that will have to be changed.

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NOTES

[1]Unfortunately, very little has been written on this aspect of publishing history. Tebbel (1975, p. 293) notes that "in the 1930s, Rand McNally was the first publisher to go into the mass production and distribution of children's books, introducing quality [sic] into such lines, to be sold in chain stores from fifteen to twenty five cents." The rest of the information in this paragraph has been obtained through interviews with principals at Western Publishing and Rand McNally.

[2]As these sentences imply, interviewees from the mass market uniformly noted they really have no data about the people who read their books. A few large publishing firms do sporadically conduct systematic research on the movement of different lines (racked in different combinations) in different kinds of outlets. However, notions about audience interests are merely inferred from successes in the market's spectrum of choice. One publishing executive noted that in his firm high costs militate against audience research and that "we're really flying by the seat of our pants." An editor even characterized as just "parlor wisdom" the generally accepted idea that a parent usually chooses the book for a young child (with or without the child present) and that adolescents take more of their own initiative in choosing books.

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